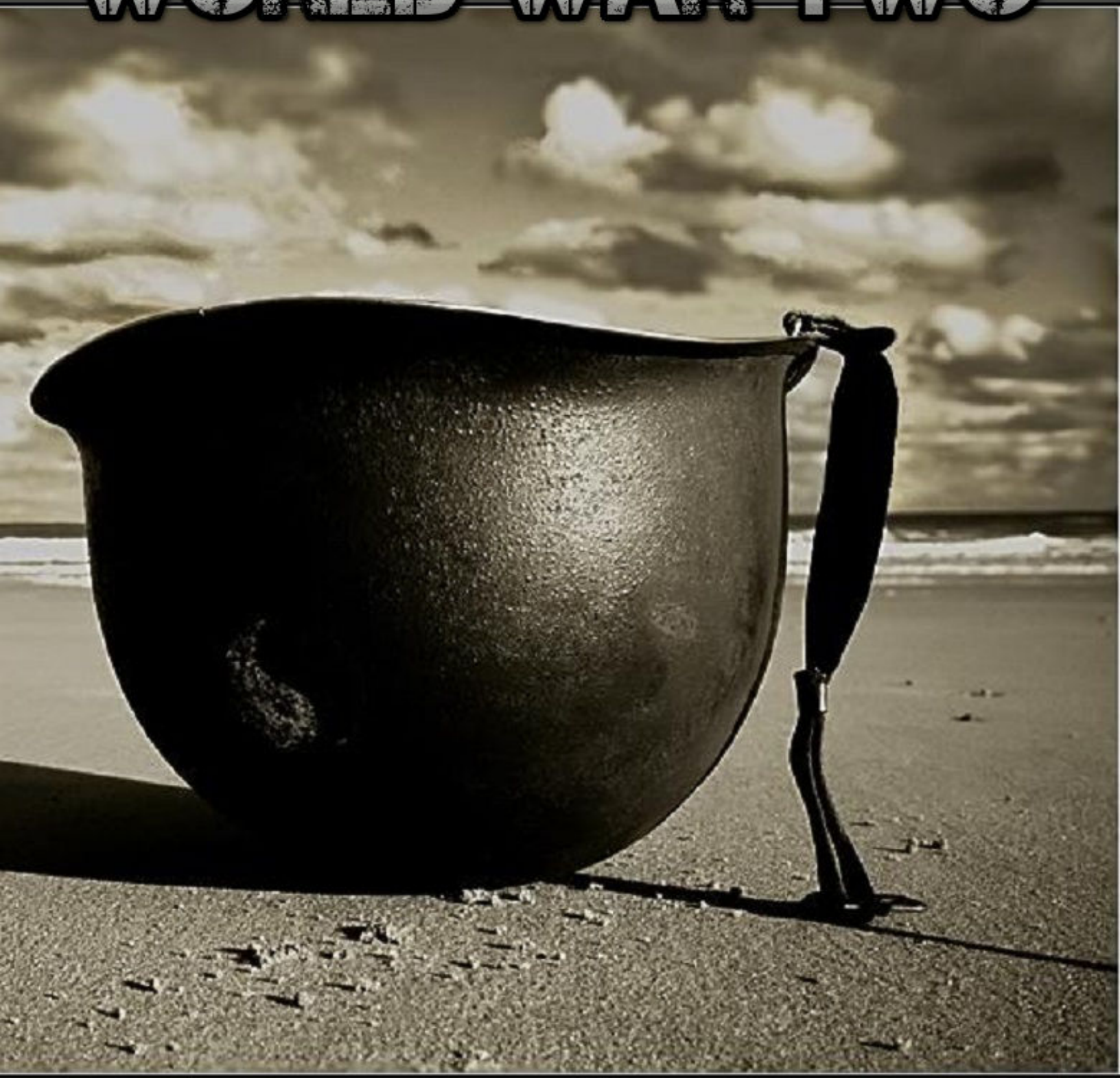
WORLD WAR TWO



NORMANDY 1944

World War Two – Norma

Patrick Buchanar

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The Battle of Normandy was fou
during World War II in the sumr
between the Allied nations and C
occupying Western Europe. Mor
later, the Normandy Invasion, or
remains the largest seaborne inv
involving nearly three million tr
the English Channel from Engla
in occupi

Twelve A
provided
that partic
invasion,

Marines approaching Omaha Beach

Australia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, New Z Netherlands, Norway, Poland, th Kingdom, and the United States.

Operation Overlord was the cod
Allied invasion of northwest Eu
assault phase, or the establishme
foothold, was known as Operati
Operation Neptune began on D-
1944) and ended on June 30, wh
had established a firm foothold i
Operation Overlord also began o
continued until Allied forces cro
Seine on August 19.

The battle began months before
when Allied bombers began to p
Normandy coast and farther sou
transportation links, and disrupt

army's build-up of their military
than 300 planes dropped 13,000
Normandy in advance of the inv
parachute regiments, with more
men, also went ahead to cut railr
up bridges, and seize landing fie

brought in men, light artillery, je
tanks.

There has been some confusion
meaning of the "D" in D-Day. T
explanation is offered by the U.S
published manuals. The Army b
codes "H-hour" and "D-Day" du
I, to indicate the time or date of
beginning. So the "D" may simp
"day" of invasion.

With the invasion of Normandy,
General Dwight D. Eisenhower
magnitude and hazards never be
He would have to move his forc

across the English Channel and s
fortified coastline. His enemy wa
and-tank-superior German army
Erwin Rommel, one of the most
generals of the war. Less than 15

Allied forces coming aboard the
seen combat.

A Personnel Lan
manned USS Sa
Army's First Divi
at Omaha Beach

An invading army had not crossed the unpredictable and dangerous English Channel since 1688. Once the massive Allied force set out, there was no turning back. The Allies boas
vessel armada that stretched as f
could see, transporting both men
across the channel to the French
addition, the Allies had 4,000 sm

craft and more than 11,000 aircr

By nightfall on June 6, more tha
soldiers were dead or wounded,
100,000 had made it ashore and
coastal villages. Within weeks, s

being unloaded at Utah and Oma
at the rate of more than 20,000 t
June 11, more than 326,000 troo
vehicles, and 105,000 tons of su
landed on the beaches. By June
had established a firm foothold i
Allied forces crossed the River S
19.

Troops take cover on Normandy beach

Military i
an import
Normand
British ar
cryptogra
in Londo

coded messages that the German
unbreakable. Messages could qu
delivered to Eisenhower within t
hours of the time the Germans h
addition, reconnaissance teams t

pictures of Omaha Beach while a
German patrols.

There is no official casualty figu
is estimated that more than 425,(
German troops were killed, wou
missing during the battle. That fi
more than 209,000 Allied casual
to roughly 200,000 German troo
wounded, the Allies also capture
soldiers. Captured Germans wer
American prisoner-of-war camp
30,000 per month, from D-Day u
1944. Between 15,000 and 20,0(
civilians were killed

during the battle.

In the end, the invasion of Normandy succeeded in its objective by sheer force of numbers. By

July 1944, some one million All
mostly American, British, and C
entrenched in Normandy. Durin
invasion, the Allies assembled n
million men and stored 16 millic
munitions, and supplies in Britai

The occupation of Normandy wa
Western Allies to bring the war t
border of Germany. If the Norma
had not occurred, there could co
been a complete possession of n
western Europe by Soviet forces

---- Selected Quotes ----

Quotes regarding D-Day, the Ba

Quotes regarding D-Day, the Ba
Normandy.

By Dwight D. Eisenhower
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of t
Expeditionary Force! You are ab
upon the Great Crusade, toward

striven these many months. The
world are upon you. The hopes a
liberty-loving people everywher
you.

Addressing the men before the i
Normandy

By Stephen A. Ambrose

During the Second World War, t
took four years to build the Atla
four beaches it held up the Allie
hour; at Omaha it held up the U.
one day. The Atlantic Wall must
regarded as one of the greatest b
military history.

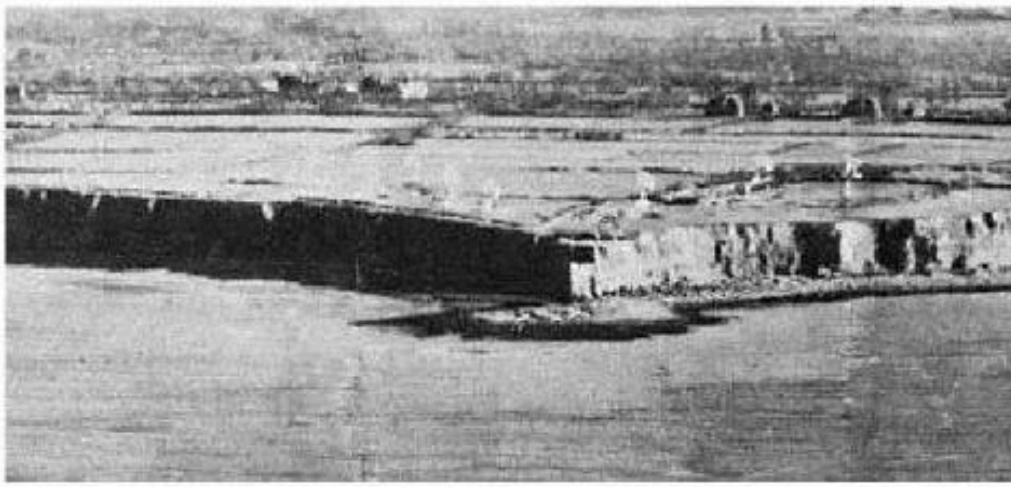
Page 377, D-Day

Omaha Beach

Omaha
Beach,

second beach from the west amo
landing areas of the Normandy
Invasion of World War II. It was
June 6, 1944 (D-Day of the inva
of the U.S. 29th and 1st infantry

of whose soldiers were drowned
approach from ships offshore or
defending fire from German troc
heights surrounding the beach.



Formally part of the Omaha inva
Pointe du Hoc, a promontory situ
west of the landing beach. On D
object of a daring seaborne assau
Army rangers, who scaled its cli
of silencing artillery pieces place
heights.

The landing beach

The largest of the D-Day assault

Beach stretched over 10 km (6 m
the fishing port of Port-en-Bessi
and the mouth of the Vire River
The western third of the beach w
seawall 3 metres (10 feet) high, a
beach was overlooked by cliffs 3

There were five exits from the sa
beach; the best was a paved road
leading to the resort village of V
Mer, two were only dirt paths, a
roads leading to the villages of C
Mer and Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer.

Germans under Field Marshal E

Rommel had built formidable de
protect this enclosed battlefield.
beach were heavily mined, and t
strongpoints
called Widerstandsnester("resist

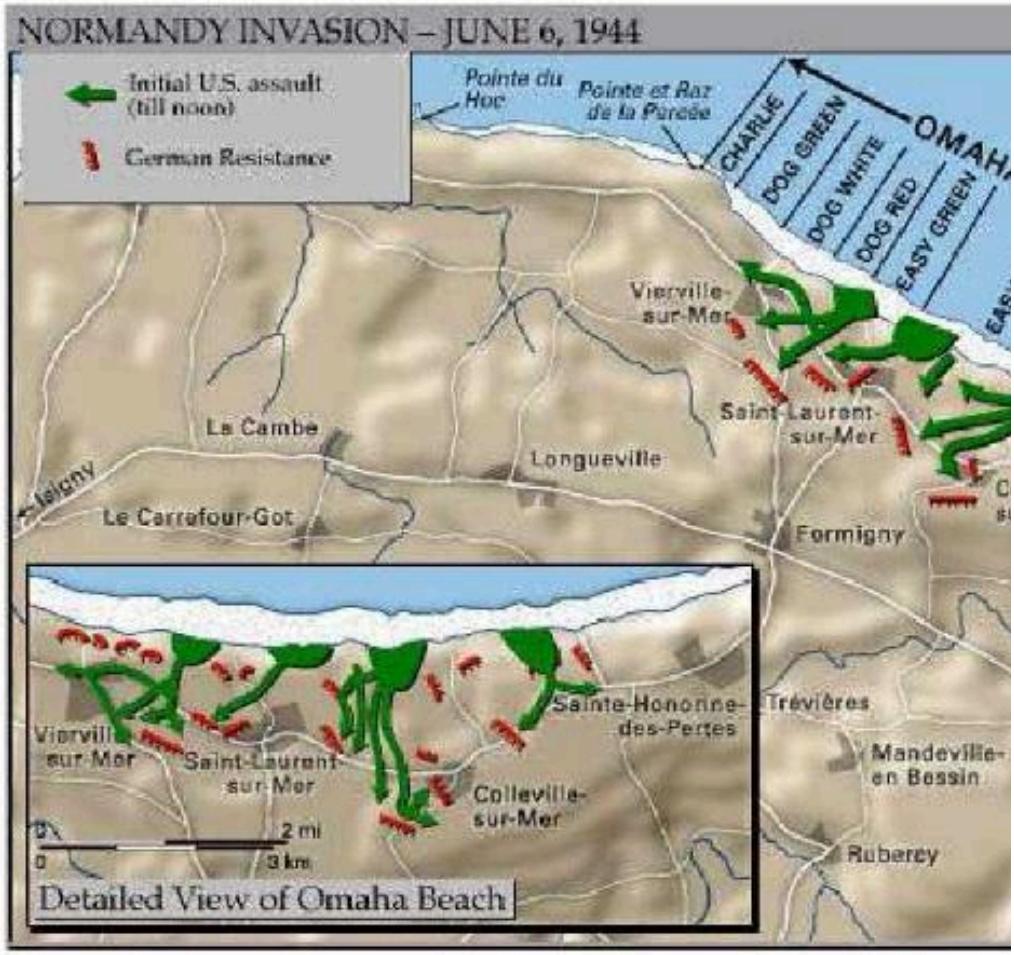
Numerous other fighting positio
area, supported by an extensive
The defending forces consisted
battalions of the veteran 352nd I
Division. Their weapons were fi
beach with grazing enfilade fire
plunging fire from the cliffs. On
killing zone.

Omaha Beach was part of the in
assigned to the U.S. First Army,
Lieutenant GeneralOmar Bradle
sectors at Omaha were code-nam
to east) Charlie, Dog (consisting
White, and Red sections), Easy (

sections), and Fox (Green and R
The beach was to be assaulted at
the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, w
116thRegiment of the 29th Divis
D-Day only. Omaha was wide e
two regiments side by side with

and so the 116th Regiment was t
(Green, White, and Red) and Eas
the 16th Regiment, 1st Division,
Easy Red and Fox Green.

The objectives of the 1st Divisio
ambitious. First it was to capture
Vierville, Saint-Laurent, and Co
was to push through and cut the
road; and then it was to attack so
Trévières and west toward the P
Elements of the 16th Regiment v
at Port-en-Bessin with British ur
Beach to the east.



From the beginning everything v
Omaha. Special "DD" tanks
(amphibious Sherman tanks fitte
screens) that were supposed to s
Regiment sank in the choppy wa

Channel. Only 2 of the 29 launcl
the beach. With the exception of
no unit of the 116th landed wher
planned. Strong winds and tidal
the landing craft from right to le
Regiment on the east half of the

fare much better, landing in a sta
with units badly intermingled.

Throughout the landing, Germar
poured deadly fire into the ranks
Americans. Bodies lay on the be
in the water. Men sought refuge
obstacles, pondering the deadly
beach to the seawall, which offe
at the base of the cliff. Destroye
vehicles littered the water's edge
at 0830 hours all landing ceased
troops on the beach were left on
realized that the exits were not t
Slowly, and in small groups, the

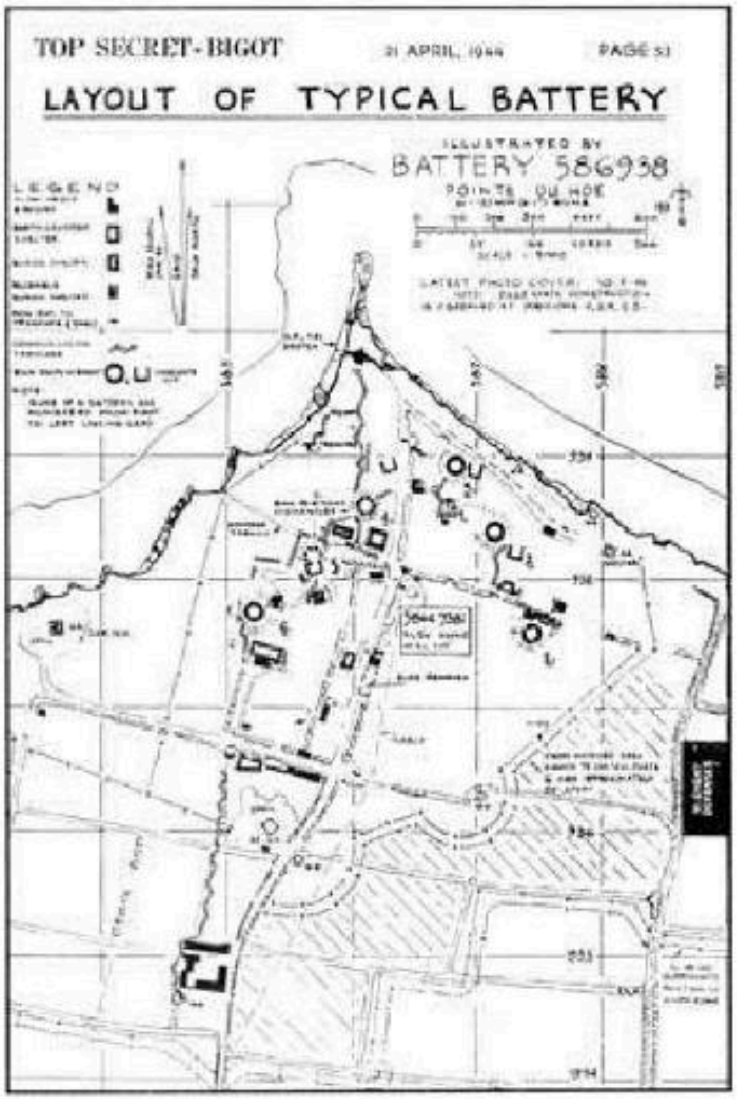
cliffs. Meanwhile, navy destroye
and, scraping their bottoms in th
blasted the German fortification
range. By 1200 hours German fi
noticeably decreased as the defe

were taken from the rear. Then c
exits were opened.

nightfall the 1st and 29th divisio
positions around Vierville, Saint
Colleville—nowhere near the pl
objectives, but they had a toehol
Americans suffered 2,400 casual

on June 6, but by the end of the
landed 34,000 troops. The Germ
Division lost 20 percent of its st
1,200 casualties, but it had no re
to continue the fight.

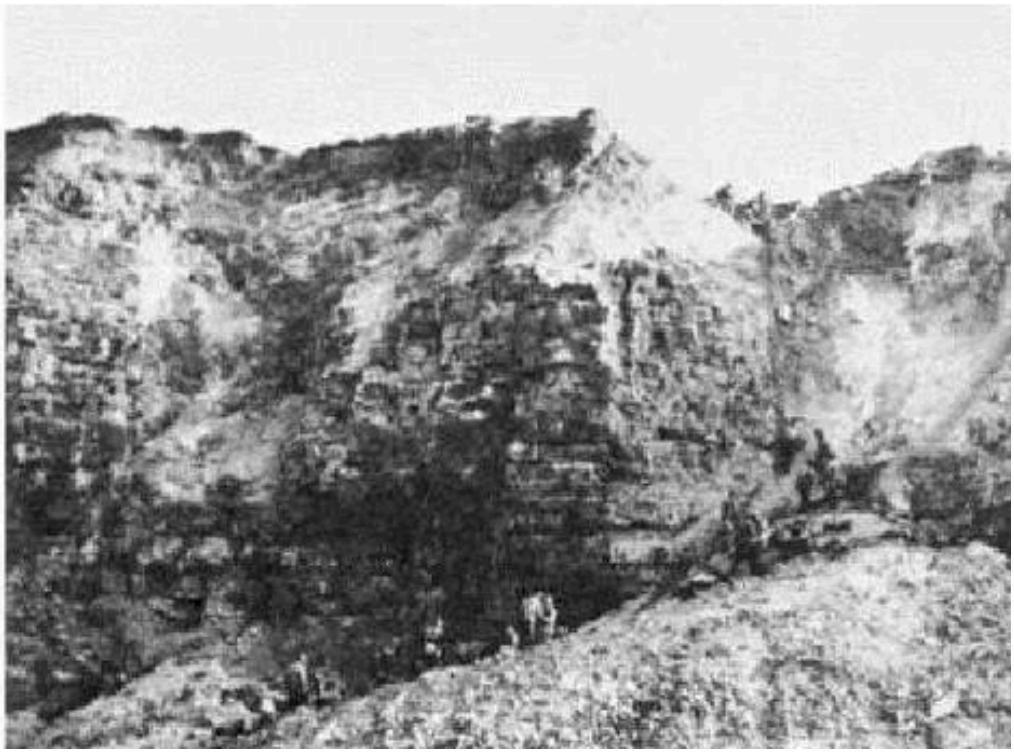
Pointe du Hoc



An ominous piece of land jutting
the English Channel, Pointe du H

elevated vantage point from whi
German guns with a range of 25
could deliver fire upon both Om
km, or 4 miles, to the east) and U
km, or 7 miles, to the west). Alli
and photoreconnaissance had ide

155-mm guns emplaced in reinf
casemates on the Pointe, and All
commanders had determined tha
neutralization of these guns was
fate of the Omaha and Utah land
of the Pointe was defended by el
German 352nd Infantry Divisior



task of neutralizing the guns, and
road running behind the Pointe f
Pierre-du-Mont to Grandcamp, f

and 5th ranger battalions, comm
Lieutenant Colonel James Rudde
was to land Companies D, E, an
2nd Battalion in a cliff-scaling a
Pointe while Company C landed
destroy gun positions on the wes
Omaha Beach. While these assa
place, Companies A and B, alon
5th Battalion, were to mark time
and wait for a signal that the clif
succeeded. If the signal came, th
follow in and also scale the heig
did not come, they were to land
and attack the Pointe from the re

Companies D, E, and F landed a
0710 hours, 40 minutes later tha
landing time. They were the vict
seas and winds, one of their land
sunk on the way in. Once landed

rangers engaged the Germans on
in a heavy firefight, and within n
man was up. In small groups the
their way to the casemates, only
empty of the big guns. They mov
cut the road behind the Pointe, a

man patrol went down a narrow
south and discovered the guns sc
(550 yards) from the casemates.
zeroed in on Utah Beach, and a (
totaling some 100 men, was asse
distance away. Using thermite gr
rangers melted and destroyed the
elevating and traversing mechan
the pieces immovable. They ther
their positions.

The other rangers offshore, not s
from the Pointe, landed at Omah
were not able to accomplish thei
attacking Pointe du Hoc since th

involved in the desperate fightin
itself. They were, however, a ke
success at Omaha.

Although early reports character
on the Pointe as a wasted effort l
German guns were not there, the
fact highly successful. By 0900 l
rangers on the Pointe had cut the

Rangers on the Pointe had cut the
the Pointe and had put the guns
They were thus the first America
accomplish its mission on D-Day
half of their fighting force. By th
day they were holding onto a sm

the heights of the Pointe, and the
counterattacking. The rangers he
days until help arrived.

Utah

Utah Beach, a site of intense figl
1944, is now a peaceful place, w
breeze, the sound of waves hittir
the site of numerous memorials t
fought 71 years ago. High on a h
the beach the Navy is remembere
several memories to various Arm
landed on the beach. But on June
was made for another, the Higgi

Monument, a memorial to the lit
their crews who made the landin
ultimately victory, possible.

1944. Germany has lost the fight
Africa, her ally Italy has turned a

the Russians have gained momer
East. Germany isn't beat yet; her
millions strong and her weapons
most potent, but the nation is at l
point. A point the Allies could e
push back onto European contin

Anticipating such an attempt as
Hitler ordered the construction o
"Atlantikwall," a series of armed
bunkers and defensive measures
across the whole northern coast
occupied Europe. The Allies test
disastrous Dieppe Raid on Aug.
cost the lives of more than a thou

and Canadian troops.

Two years later the Allies finally
numbers necessary to breach the
defenses and begin the long figh
to do that they had to first make

Europe. Their strike would have
the defenses at one point with gr
than the Germans could repulse.

The key to delivering those over
numbers to the beaches was a sir
wooden boat, the Landing Craft
Personnel (LCVP) also known a
Boat."

Its origin lay in Louisiana's swa
Nebraskan Andrew Jackson Hig
designed and built flat-bottomed
craft that could operate in two fe
a propeller that wouldn't get tan
vegetation or debris.

Andrew Jackson Higgins was bo
Columbus, Neb., in 1886. Raised
served briefly in the Nebraska N
where he had his first involveme
troops over waterways. He move

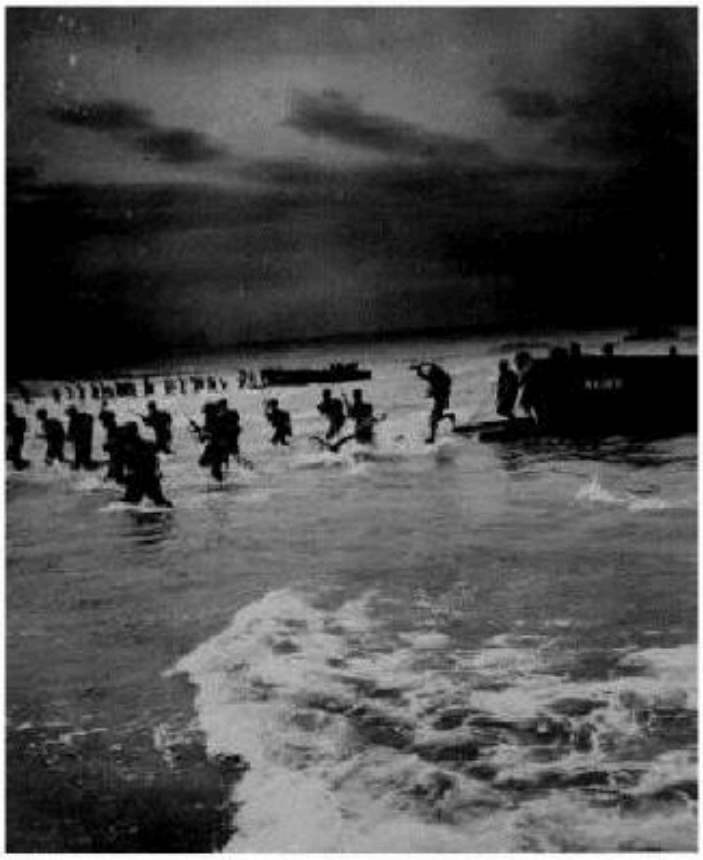
in 1906 and worked in the lumbe
shipping industries, ultimately st
boatyard. During World War II I
design and build 20,000 watercra
military.

Higgins' boat design impressed
Corps, which ordered a version t
designated the Landing Craft Pe
or LCPL. The LCPL served in b
theaters but it had a drawback; p
cargo had to be off-loaded over
Troops would be more vulnerabl
while attempting to get off the b
water.

The solution for quicker unloadi
equipment came from observing
enemy's belligerent actions in th
Empire of Japan spent the major
waging a ground war against its

China. Fighting in coastal cities
Shanghai they employed Daihats
with bow ramps that could be br
hostile beach, drop their ramps a
to rush directly into combat. The
Higgins to incorporate this featu
boat for them, which he assured

The new Landing Craft Vehicle
(LCVP) was extremely similar t
predecessor. It remained the sam
required about two feet of water
with its new bow ramp Soldiers
could get directly onto a beach.



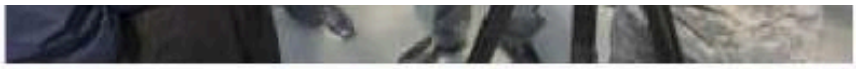
American troops leap forward to
African beach during final amph
maneuvers." James D. Rose, Jr.,
2326. National Archives

The new LCVP began hitting the
1942 on Guadalcanal and in Ope

1942 on Guadalcanal and in Ope
the American landings in North
boat's employment was a succes
went on to land troops on Sicily,
Pacific as the Allies pushed onw
proven and effective means of d

disposal it would be possible for
attempt to breach the Atlantic W

The time had come for the allied
Europe. It was June 5, 1944, a rc
caused Eisenhower to delay the i
hours in the hopes of better weat
good reason. The Higgins is a sl
mercy of both wind and waves.
weather, the better the chances f



UTAH BEACH, France (6 June
Lea Cuatt, 173rd Airborne, inter
War II U.S. Navy veteran Joe Sc
Beach Museum, June 6, 2015. S

landing craft that delivered troop
on D-Day, 71 years ago. (U.S. N
Mass Communication Specialist
R. Krigbaum/Released)

"They're hard to control, a big w
and you're over there 20 feet," F
Navy Sailor Joe Scida said. Scid
many coxswains piloting Higgin
1944. Hand gesturing, he motior
being swept diagonally. Scida w
see the dedication of the Higgins
monument on Utah Beach.

"Sometimes you hit the beach, it
off, sometimes you hit the beach

off, it takes three or four tries to
to God that you never hit a sandl
you have all those poor Soldiers
jump in the water and the water
[chest-deep] or here [neck-deep]

"The storm was so great that day
land where you were told."

Landing on the coast of France u
Nazi machine gun fire are these
soldiers, shown just as they left t
Coast Guard landing boat, June
CPhoM. Robert F. Sargent. (Coa

NARA FILE #: 026-G-2343

Thousands of Higgins' boats lan
British, and Canadian armies on
the French province of Normand

1,089 were LCVPs, and many ot
landing craft that Higgins desig

"Andrew Higgins is the man wh
for us," Dwight D. Eisenhower
the LCVP and its creator. "If Hi
designed and built those LCVPs
have landed over an open beach.
strategy of the war would have b

Among the first troops to land o
Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt,
happened with Scida's craft, he
target. Personally reconnoiterin
Roosevelt ordered his men to pr
his location anyway and they we

first to break through the Germa
defenses. It was decided the Hig
monument should be located at t
where Roosevelt's men first brol

site is adjacent to both the Utah
and the memorial to the U.S. Na

UTAH BEACH, France (6 June
Marie-du-Mont school children
Utah Beach for the 71st annivers
June 6, 2015. (U.S. Navy photo

June 6, 2019. (U.S. Navy photo
Communication Specialist 1st C
Krigbaum/Released)

The kilometer 0 marker of the L
which traces the 1,146 kilometer
Patton's Third Army from Utah

Bastogne was originally on the s
moved across the street to make
new monument.

"We are very proud to be able to
memorial here, there were thous
who landed at this place and its
honor this man [Higgins] and als
lasting relationship with the Uni
museum manager Ingrid Anquet

The project to honor an America
builder began with an unlikely s
British Army officer. Last year T
Jones, who is also the author of
Normandy, briefed the U.S. con

delegation to the D-Day 70th an
during it brought up the Higgins
Nebraska-born creator. One mer
delegation was U.S. Congressma
Fortenberry of Nebraska.

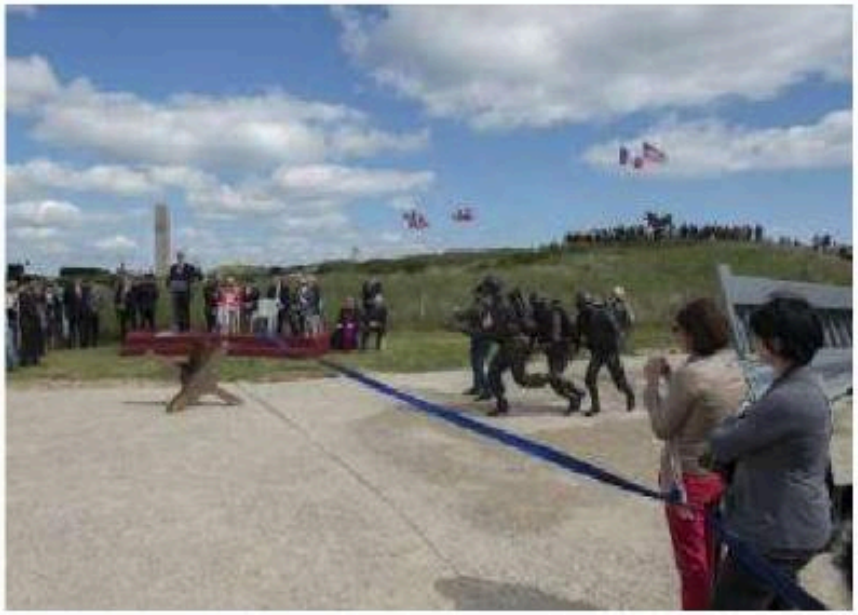
Afterwards Fortenberry told Kil
"You're a very unusual Brit. Fir
know that Nebraska exists and s
know Andrew Jackson Higgins
state."

This led to an invitation for Kilv
visit Nebraska and speak to vete
associations. Seeing Columbus,
Andrew Jackson Higgins Monu
tour Kilvert-Jones said, "This ne
replicated in Normandy."

With less than a year to execute,
Columbus jumped on the idea ar
funds with the goal to have an id

monument ready and in place fo
Day anniversary. The funds wer
nine months and within 10 mont
monument was in Le Havre, Fra
be shipped to Utah Beach.

"What we've achieved in the co
full exact replica of the LCVP H
except this is made of steel and i
most expensive ship's paint in th
a thousand dollars a pot. As a re
monument will last more than a
years," said Kilvert-Jones.



UTAH BEACH, France (6 June

Congressman Jeff Fortenberry sp
dedication of the Higgins Boat M
Utah Beach, France, June 6, 201
photo by Mass Communication S
Class David R. Krigbaum/Releas

It was unveiled on the 71st anniv
Day with Kilvert-Jones, Anqueti
Mayor Michael Moser and Cong
Fortenberry on hand. A statue of
Jackson Higgins was also unveil
Utah Beach Museum beside the
original World War II Higgins B

Now secure in its historic setting
thousands of these small craft or
difference, the last Higgins Boat
Beach.

The Beginning of the End

The road to the invasion of Nazi
France began more than two yea

actual execution. In its early stag
plan was a British operation call
which would move troops onto t
the event of a German collapse.
United States entered the war, th

resurrected as a combined Britis
operation to cross the English Cl
pierce Adolf Hitler's 'Atlantic W

Roundup had to wait, however, i
Operation Torch, the British-Am
of North Africa. After Torch, the
planning Operation Overlord, as
to be known, and fixed the targe
1, 1944.

The Germans also had been prep
knew that the Allies must invade
to carry the ground war into Ger
Germans' major unanswered que
when and where the Allies woul

Most German strategists felt that
would be the Pas-de-Calais area,
English Channel was narrowest.
strongest defenses were construc

The German forces in Western E
commanded by Field Marshal G
Rundstedt, consisted of Army G
Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, c
Army Group B, was given the re
throwing the Allied invasion for
sea.

Opinions on the best method of
Allies differed greatly. Rundsted
advocated a central reserve that
to repel the invaders after their i
known. Rommel challenged that
he believed that Allied air superi
prevent the central reserve from

effective counterattack. The time
invasion force, Rommel believed
first hit the beaches. To that end,
have the strongest units stationed
coastline and built coastal batteri

strongpoints, augmented by thou
invasion obstacles and millions

The result was a compromise be
conflicting philosophies on defe
neither to be effective. Another
hampered the German defensive
that they, unlike the Allies, had
military commander, so rivalries
between the individual departme
were numerous overlapping resp

D-Day was originally scheduled
1944. SHAEF arrived at this dat
two factors–moonlight and tide.
be near sunrise, when the amphi

would have a rising tide, which
them to land close to obstacles w
ashore on top of them. The parat
a full moon for visibility. The da
proper tide-moonlight formula c

target date were June 5, 6 and 7.
chosen for D-Day to allow a buf
attack needed to be postponed.

An unprecedented level of secur
on the Allied army to prevent in
Despite those efforts, some brea
still occurred. Those incidents w
grand scheme of things, but they
the myriad questions in the Allie
minds. Had every detail been co
sufficiently deliberated? Eisenhc
the situation, said, The mighty h
a coiled spring. When the fateful
finally arrived, that human sprin

release its energy against the Ge
defending the coast of Normand

With June, however, arrived the
prospect of terrible weather. In f
was so bad that General Eisenho

to postpone the invasion by one
SHAEF staff members met to re
options, they were faced with th
that June 6 did not look much be
original D-Day. The meteorolog
a thin ray of hope that a lull in th
allow enough time to launch the
no one could say whether the fol
operation would be possible. Th
tough one, but the invasion woul

Meanwhile, almost providentiall
in the German defensive structu
them to be taken completely by
the bad weather, the German na

usual patrol of the English Chan
practice drill scheduled for June
off. The German meteorological
unaware of the break in the weat
of the attack, many of the top Ge
were absent from their commanc

in Germany visiting his wife on
and several officers were some d
Rennes or on their way there for
exercise.

The assault on Normandy began
when the pathfinders for the Am
units left their planes and parach
Five minutes later, on the other s
invasion area, the British pathfin
jump. The pathfinders were spec
find and mark the drop zones. Tl
airborne assault was to commen
hour.

The airborne attack became conf

stiff winds and the evasive flyin
transport planes when they enco
aircraft fire. As a result, the para
scattered over a wide area and m
drop zones, some by as much as

complications were caused by th
the worst terrain was on the Cote
The Germans, expecting diversi
Normandy and Brittany, had lac
fields with anti-personnel and gl
flooded the low areas. The flood
most trouble for the Americans
82nd Airborne divisions.

The airborne units were to secur
the amphibious assault. That me
bridges, crossroads and coastal b
accomplishing those tasks, the p
to withstand any German counte

Widely scattered, the paratroope

battles in the dark that were fierc
preludes of what was to come. T
began to coalesce and organize t
addition to the many small victo
significant successes were achie

occurred within 15 minutes of th
when a group of British glider in
key bridges over the Orne River
Canal. Later, members of the U.
captured the valuable crossroads
Ste. Mère Eglise. Just before the
assault, paratroopers of the Briti
captured the coastal battery at M

As the airborne units struggled t
goals, the great fleet made its wa
channel to its appointment with
Allied fleet assembled first in A
nicknamed Piccadilly Circus, ap
miles southeast of the Isle of Wi

the individual invasion forces sa
southwesterly arc toward their p
beaches. Leading that grand arm
minesweepers. Behind them foll
array of naval vessels of every c
Never before had such a fleet be

Including the landing craft carrie
combined Allied invasion armad
to 5,000 ships. Approximately 1
were to cross the English Chann
assault beaches code-named Uta
Gold, Juno and Sword. Each lan
divided into sections designated
which were further subdivided i
designated by colors. Each unit,
specific place to land and a corre
mission for its assigned area.

The first areas of French soil wr
German control were the Isles-S
located three miles off Utah Bea

became concerned that these isla
used as sites for heavy guns. The
U.S. 4th and 24th Cavalry squad
designated to take the islands pri
invasion. The assault teams foun

mines. The Germans had left the
Marcouf unoccupied.

Around 5 a.m., the German shor
opened a sporadic fire on the ap
At the same time, the German na
sole contribution, firing torpedoe
Möwe, Falcke, and Jaguar of the
Boat Flotilla from Le Havre and
Norwegian destroyer Svenner.

For the majority of the assault tr
the war had not begun yet. After
long as 48 hours aboard the varie
ships, many of the men were mis
Some could not imagine anythin

they were already experiencing.
hand, there were some who were
particularly the veterans of the 1
Dunkirk, who were about to mak

The naval bombardment began a
The air attack followed. The nav
bombardments were designed to
beach guns and obstacles, pin do
and provide shelter for the groun
open beaches by making craters.
largely failed in their objectives.
poor visibility caused by low clo
smoke, it was decided that the bo
delay the release of bombs 30 se
hitting the assaulting troops. As
bombs fell inland and missed the
Although the naval bombardmer
accurate, it was not much more e
the hardened German gun empla

the hardened German gun emplac

The weather also was partially re
causing some of the assault craft
assigned landing areas. Addition
the landing craft and amphibious
foundered in the rough sea. In th

most of the craft carrying artiller
intended to support the incoming
the high waves.

At Utah Beach, a strange stroke
occurred when the assault craft e
southerly current that caused the
wrong sector. The shore batteries
have contested a landing in the c
would undoubtedly have taken a
landing at the new sector was vi
unopposed.

Despite that good fortune, Brig.
Roosevelt, Jr., of the 4th Infantry
tough decision to make. The plan

area fronted two exits from the b
Americans now faced only one.
push north and divert the suppor
correct area, or should they rema
relatively quiet beach and use th

Roosevelt, the eldest son of forn
Theodore Roosevelt and a cousi
president, Franklin D. Roosevelt
general officer to land in the firs
conferring with his battalion con
decided to start the war from her
on the one exit he had rather tha
proverbial two in the bush.

Twelve miles east of Utah, the n
Omaha Beach encountered the fi
resistance anywhere on June 6. T
planners expected Omaha Beach
defended. Allied intelligence had
low-quality static division was d

area. Somehow the presence of t
Infantry had gone undetected. Tl
Omaha also gave the defenders a
vantage point with crisscrossed f

The approach to the beach was a
death. Many of the landing craft
to shore; they either were hit by
struck mines. Those that survive
to discharge their troops often di
over the heads of the soldiers wh
the open ramps. German strong p
on the men who made it to the be
cover behind beach obstacles and
landing craft. Although casualty
most were high. Within 10 minu
the beach, Company A, 116th Re
Infantry Division, suffered 96 pe
wounded.

Compounding the situation were
the demolition teams encountere
paths through the beach obstacle
soon became aware of the activi
engineers and made special targe
Worse, the engineers' own comr

cover behind the very obstacles a
blown. The demolition teams ha
to clear 5 1/2 lanes across the en
Beach area before the second wa
the tide came in, covering the ob
one of those lanes could be mark
that the next wave of fresh troop
ashore would have to endure the
as the first. Because of the high r
casualties under withering Germ
the units on the beach found ther
leaderless. Incoming troops only
confusion.

One eyewitness to this seemingl

disaster was war correspondent I
Hemingway. He described the di
burning tanks and landing craft a
shocked, dead and dying troops
at the waterline. The…[assault]
where they had fallen, he said, lo

many heavily laden bundles…be
first cover.

As the debris of war piled up wit
each succeeding assault wave, fc
seemed that their worst fears–co
of the landing–had been realized
some considered evacuating the
diverting the reinforcements to e
or British sectors.

West of Omaha Beach was Poin
rocky outcropping with almost v
where a large coastal battery wa
situated. The U.S. 2nd Ranger B
charged with destroying the batt

thought impossible the Rangers
scaled the 100-foot cliffs under
on top, though, they found that t
not there after all.

If the American experience at Ut
and at Omaha the worst, the exp
three British beaches were some
between. The British came ashor
bombardment and at a later H-ho
the later H-hour, the troops land
tide and closer to the beaches, gi
shorter assault run, possibly savi
from high losses similar to those
Commando units were used to c
of the British beaches. Also, two
submarines, X-20 and X-23, wer
flanks and guide landings in Ope

Like the engineers at Omaha, the

trogmen encountered numerous
clearing the beach obstacles. As
later waves made their runs, it ap
invasion was going to be a rough
out, however, that the offshore o
the toughest resistance some of t

troops encountered. Resistance f
German defenders was sporadic
of the British landing areas. In s
opposition was light; in others, i
murderously heavy. The 1st Han
Regiment landed in the teeth of
of the German 352nd Infantry D
west side of Gold Beach. The Ha
nearly wiped out as they left thei
and struggled ashore. In most pl
units were able to strike inland s
hour.

Of the three British beaches, the
Juno had the greatest difficulty.

delay of 25 minutes due to rough
their landing ordeal began. Upon
beach, they found that many of t
had not been knocked out, and th
intense. But as difficult as the fig
was also brief. Within half an ho

Canadians were off the beach. W
time the sector could even be de
and the support waves had little
to shore. Before long, Gold and
were linked by a single continuo

The smallest of the five Allied a
Sword Beach, the easternmost la
invasion there started without se
opposition, but each succeeding
under heavier mortar fire. Despi
resistance, the British moved ste

At 9:30 a.m., Sword Beach was
only German daylight air attack
invasion. Prior to the Allied assa

Germans had strengthened their
defenses by withdrawing most o
France. As a result, the only plar
range of Normandy when the inv
were two Focke-Wulf Fw-190As

Wing 26, flown by Lt. Col. Josef
and Sergeant Heinz Wodarczyk,
beach at an altitude of 50 feet be
through a gauntlet of anti-aircraf

All in all, the initial phase of the
was extremely successful. By the
morning, elements of all three of
divisions had advanced several m
the pockets of German resistance
or melted away, it looked as if th
have no trouble reaching their D
objectives. Yet already some uni
trouble. The commandos were u
all of the beaches together, and t

were beginning to regroup.

The German reaction to the Allie
slow and confused. The airborne
believed to be only a diversionar
the Seventh Army, positioned in

was put on alert, few of its comn
what they should do. Rundstedt
activation of the 12th SS Panzer
Youth and Panzer Division Lehr
simultaneously sent word of his
to Oberkommando der Wehrmac
German supreme headquarters),
permission to use the two divisic
Panzer Division was in the imm
of the landings at Juno and Swor
been on alert and ready to move
early morning hours but had rec
Around 5:30 a.m., the 21st's cor
wait no longer and ordered his u
against the British 6th Airborne

against the British 6th Airborne
River. The orders finally came fo
The 21st was instructed to count
Beach. That meant that the Germ
extract themselves from the figh
paratroopers and move around th

vital town of Caen to get into po
counterattack. Completing that n
the rest of the morning and into t
Confusion seemed to reign in otl
front as well. The commander of
Infantry Division believed that tl
Omaha was completely under co
the Americans would soon be de
decided then to commit his reser
areas.

On Omaha Beach, soldiers who
been paralyzed with fear came o
and began to move inland. Instru
shaking the paralysis were a few

who defied enemy fire and inspi
advance.

The U.S. Navy supplied critical
the soldiers attempting to move
and take the commanding positi

bluffs from their German defend
destroyers came in so close to sh
supporting fire that they risked r
Slowly, painfully, the men at On
overcome the German strongpoi
previously pinned them down.

The officers at OKW were not c
the Normandy landing was the p
thrust. They still feared a landing
north, and the Allied advances ir
more distressing. Rundstedt was
to commit the armored reserve.
at OKW, the news did not warra
Hitler from his sleep. As was his

the Führer had gone to bed at 4 a
dared wake him until more was l
10 a.m. the officers found the co
him, and a conference was calle
of Nazi Germany heard the sket
invasion, he remained convince

Normandy attack was only a div
Rundstedt's request to use the ar
was never mentioned. The panze
finally released around 3 p.m.–n
do any good.

In the meantime, the only seriou
counterattack on D-Day was pre
underway. The 21st Panzer had l
splintered while moving into pos
unable to attack the British in fu
same time, the British had logist
their own to deal with and were
advantage of the Germans' delay

The clash finally occurred north

Périers and Biéville, hamlets tha
the local high ground. The attack
few minutes. The British had bee
establish defensive positions pric
of the German tanks, and they st

tanks' advance with the help of r
The Germans then withdrew and
into positions outside Caen. That
move effectively stopped the Bri
drive.

The infantry support element of
moved west of Caen and missed
Périers and Biéville. Instead, the
north through the gap between Ju
beaches. The tank commander o
unaware of the gap and never ac
A follow-up attack was ordered
with the combined panzer force,
foiled by a scheduled glider rein

Through the course of the day, tl
almost half its tanks.

By evening, despite earlier optin
was hard pressed to hold back th
invaders. All day it had been figl

Americans at Omaha and the Bri
Now, with its reserves committe
casualties high, the effectiveness
crack unit had ebbed.

The end of June 6 saw the Allies
established in Hitler's Europe. A
Corps had penetrated a good five
only light casualties. The V Corp
suffering 2,500 casualties, held a
one-mile-deep strip of coastline-
Americans were in control of the
Rangers also held a small piece
Pointe du Hoc. Even though this
attack, it had drawn some of the

352nd away from where they mi
employed more effectively. The
Second Army had lost less than
had penetrated as much as ten m
places.

The Allies, however, had failed t
of their goals. The British had nc
and would not do so for another
of Bayeux also was not taken. N
invasion forces had reached thei
objective lines, and there remain
gaps between the OmahaGold ar
areas. At Utah, the 4th Division
linked up with all of the 82nd Ai
1st and 29th divisions at Omaha
of being thrown back into the se
attack could be mounted against

The Germans, however, remaine
to the Allies' true intentions. Stil

another invasion was to come at
the commanders held the Fifteen
reserve. It was not used until too
any difference at Normandy. Eve
12th SS Panzer and Panzer Lehr
been initially dispatched, they w

the critical moment when their p
have made a difference for Germ
quality units the Germans had at
352nd Infantry and the 21st Panz
heavy casualties in the course of
fighting. The Germans were able
invasion of the first day but were
regain any ground. Air superiori
capability were the telling factor
success.

Hitler's Atlantic Wall had failed
the Allied invasion. The invader
destroyed on the beaches as Ron
nor were they thrown back into t

Rundstedt had planned. The Ger
Allied army contained for two m
the breakout occurred in August,
holding the Allies back. From th
Germany had only nine months

A Harrowing Tale

With biting irony, Soviet propag
in 1944 that the British and Ame
in Normandy were facing only tl
Wehrmacht. 'We know where yc
Germans are now,' wrote Ilya Eh
Pravda. 'We have accommodatec
earth, in sand, in clay.'

But to claim that western Allies
only second-rate troops was simp
late June, the British Second Arr
against the largest concentration
divisions assembled since their v

against the Red Army in the Kur
in Russia the previous summer. (
received opinion, the fighting in
even bloodier than on the eastern

At the beginning of June 1944, t
reaching a climax. German troop
brutalised by the savagery of the
fighting inRussia, where the Red
secretly preparing its vast encirc
Germans' Army Group Centre.

Some of the Waffen-SS division
Allies in Normandy were the mo
disciplined of all; soldiers indoct
Hitler's propaganda and bent on
'terror bombing' of German citie

The Allies, meanwhile, had laun
greatest amphibious operation in
more than 5,000 ships. And altho
for the cross-Channel phase of C
Overlord was meticulous, perhap
next stage was not so clearly tho

Reluctant to accept heavy casual
many years of fighting, and almo
unchallenged in the skies, the Al
bomb towns and villages in Nor
road junctions to block the street
and hinder German divisions arr
counter-attack their beach-heads
capital of Caen, just ten miles in
included on the list.

The relentless bombing of Caen
was a tragic blunder. It made a n
General Montgomery's plan to ta

General Montgomery's plan to t
the first 24 hours of the campaig
into rubble meant it was far hard
to penetrate the town and provid
for its

defenders.

In addition, there were hardly an
troops left in the town, since the
north towards their positions clo
beaches. Instead, the civilians in
suffered more than 2,000 casualt
D-Day, as many French civilians
soldiers.

This is why I said in a magazine
week that the bombing ofCaen w
war crime'. I was no doubt overs
in the heat of the moment, but it
controversy.

controversy.

The playwright William Douglas
brother of the future Prime Mini
cashiered from the Army and ser

hard labour for his protest over t
soon afterwards.

Whatever the case, the terrible fa
just one part of a campaign of ur
in Normandy in which the Allies
the worst fighting of what was a
war - and responded to the sava
combat with equal ferocity.

In the early hours of June 6, two
American paratroopers

Snubbing Britian: France's Presi
Sarkozy with his wife Carla Bru

dropped into battle in Normandy
'Krauts'. Some had bought comn
inLondon, and several had equip

with cut-throat razors.

They had been instructed how to
silently by slicing through the ju

voice box. Before departure, the
received pep talks from their cor

'There was a great feeling in the
excitement of battle,' noted one
After a short speech to arouse th
ardour, their regimental commar
down, pulled a large commando
boot and waved it above his hea
the dawn of another day,' he yell
stick this knife into the heart of t
dirtiest, filthiest Nazi in all of Eu
cheer went up as his men brandi
knives in response.

The drop in the early hours of Ju
chaotic. Those paratroopers who
caught in trees presented easy ta
were shot as they struggled. Atr

spread among the survivors, witl
German soldiers had bayoneted
below or even turned flame-thro

With revenge on their minds and
after the jump, the American par
was up. A trooper in the 82nd re
instructions only too clearly: 'Ta
because they will slow you dow

Stories about German soldiers m
paratroopers inflamed the Ameri
further. A soldier in the 101st re

after they had come across two c
paratroopers 'with their privates
stuck into their mouths', the capt

them gave the order: 'Don't you
any prisoners! Shoot the bastard

In a number of cases, the paratro
prisoners captured by others. A
and a corporal hauled a captured
and noncombatant from a farmy
present heard a burst of automati
when the sergeant returned 'nobo
thing'.

Some men appear to have enjoye
paratrooper recalled having com

member of his company the follo
who appeared to be wearing red
of the standard issue yellow ones

Bravery: Commandos advance i
first village in Normandy, Franc

In fact, they were the yellow one
in blood. 'I asked him where he g
gloves from, and he reached dov
pants and pulled out a whole stri

had been earhunting all night an
sewn on an old boot lace.'

There were cases of brutal lootir
commander of the 101st Airborn

came across the body of a Germa
saw that somebody had cut off h
the wedding ring. A sergeant in t
Parachute Infantry Regiment wa
when he found that members of
killed some Germans and then u
for bayonet practice.

On occasions, however, the killi
was prevented. A handful of para
the 101st, including a lieutenant
were standing in a farmyard talk
French inhabitants. They were a
around a dozen troopers from th

at the double, herding a group of
German orderlies.

They ordered them to lie down.
boys pleaded for their lives. The

intended to shoot them all, claim
the troopers' buddies caught by t
in trees had been turned into 'Ro
a German soldier with a flame-th

He pulled the bolt back on his Th
machine gun. In desperation, the
the legs of the lieutenant and the
they and the French family shou
sergeant not to shoot them. Final
was persuaded. The boys were lo
farm's cellar.

But the sergeant was not put off
vengeance. 'Let's go and find son
kill!' he yelled to his men and th
the double. The members of the
shaken by what they had witness

people had gone ape,' one of the
later.

The hatred was equally intense 5
east, where paratroopers of the E
Airborne Division suffered from
bit as chaotic as the American or
battalion alone, 192 men were ne
They had dropped into the flood
round the River Dives and been
mud.

And a German senior NCO in th

Infanterie-Division executed eig
British paratroopers on the spot,
obedience of Hitler's notorious
'Kommandobefehl' order which
immediate shooting of all specia

Although the Allied invasion tro
managed to secure their beachhe
General Eisenhower nor Montgc
foreseen that the battle ahead wc
deadlier.

The Americans in the west had t
marshland and the small fields a
hedgerows of Normandy. The B
Canadians around Caen, on the c
to cross huge, rolling wheatfield
Germans turned solid stone farm
hamlets into formidable defensiv

[illegible]

United: American and allied troc
through the water onto a beach i
France during the D-Day landing

On June 7, the 2nd Battalion of t
Rifles made a brave charge acro

Rifles made a brave charge acro
cornfields towards the village of
fought their way in, but a newly
detachment of the 12th SS Hitle
Division forced them to retreat.

The Ulster Rifles had to leave th
from D Company in a ditch outs
They were certain that the young
the Hitler Jugend shot them all a

On their right, the Canadians soo
involved in a bitter cycle of reve
12th SS. The fighting was pitiles
of war crimes were made by both
Germans claimed that the British
that they had shot prisoners in re

But the Hitler Jugend argument s

unconvincing, especially when a
Canadian soldiers are said to hav
executed during the first days of
almost all by members of the 12
first killings had taken place on

A Frenchwoman from Caen, wh
the town of Authie to see if an o
right, discovered 'about 30 Cana
massacred and mutilated by the

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles later
SS had shot 18 of their men, wh
taken prisoner and interrogated a
command post in the Abbaye d'A
ancient church surrounded by m
buildings. One of them, Major H
apparently been decapitated.

Again, this was the work of the I
which was probably the most inc
all Waffen-SS divisions.

Many of its key commanders ca
SS Panzer-Division Leibstandar
They had been formed in the Ra
'race war' of the eastern front. K
divisonal commander, had shot
Modlin in Poland in 1939.

Later, during the invasion of the
he ordered a village nearKharko
to the ground. All its inhabitants
Nazi propaganda and the eastern
brutalised them, and they saw th
west as no different.

Killing Allied prisoners was seer
revenge for the horror being infl
Bomber Command on German c
discipline was pitiless. Accordin
F¸hrer decree, SS soldiers

accused of high treason if taken
enemy unwounded.

They had been forcefully remind
before the invasion, so it was ha
that the British and Canadians ca
SS alive.

But perhaps the most horrific sto
fanaticism came from a soldier
from Alsace who was drafted int
Panzer-Division Leibstandarte A

A fellow Alsatian in his compan
been forcibly recruited, could no
fighting any more and tried to es
column of French refugees. He v
members of their regiment and b

Their company commander then
men to beat him to death.

With every bone in his body bro
was thrown into a shell-hole. Th
declared that this was an exampl
'Kameradenerziehung', an 'educa
comradeship'.

But it was not just the brute fana
Germans that the Allies had to c
Fighting in the claustrophobic c
hedgerows and small fields of

the Normandy <cite>bocage </c
American commanders to compa
warfare.

The Germans described it as a 's
Buschkrieg' - a 'dirty bush war'
advantage lay with them, the def

The fear aroused by fighting in t
<cite>bocage </cite>produced a
that had never existed before the
only good Jerry soldiers are the
soldier in the 1st Infantry Divisi
in a 'Dear Folks' letter to his fam
in Minnesota.

'I've never really hated anything

And it's not because of some blu
a brass-hat. I guess I'm probably
nut - but who isn't? Probably th
way to be.'

Combatants were shown no mer
both sides were almost always sl
American soldiers were advised
wounded by a sniper. He would
another round on a corpse, but w
fire again if they tried to crawl a

Shoreward: WWIILanding ship
ahead are silhouetted beneath th
of a gun

German snipers climbed trees ar
themselves to the trunk so that if

not fall out. Another favourite hi
more open country was in a hayr

That practice, however, was soo
both American and British soldi
fire tracer bullets to set the rick a
down the hidden rifleman as he t

Both the British on the Caen fro
Americans found that the Germa
brilliant at camouflage and conc
dug themselves in like 'moles in
with overhead cover against artil

and tunnels under the hedgerows

A small opening onto the field fr
hideout provided the ideal apertu

to scythe down an advancing An
with the rapid fire of an MG 42 1

Fighting against the Red Army h
German veterans of the eastern f
every

trick imaginable. If there were sl
approach to one of their position
place anti-personnel mines at the
attacker's instinct would be to th
into it to take cover when under
mortar fire.

If the Germans abandoned a pos
only prepared booby-traps in the
would leave behind a box of gre

several had been tampered with
time delay to zero.

They were also expert at conceal
known to the Americans as a 'Bo
in ditches. It was also called the
because it sprang up when releas
shrapnel at crotch height.

Another German trick when the
launched a night attack was for
gun to fire high with tracers over
heads. This encouraged them to

while the other machine-gunners
conventional bullets.

Both American and British tank
many dangers to fear. The 88mn

gun used against tanks was terrif
even from over a mile away. An
country of the bocage, German t
groups with the shoulderlaunche
armourpenetrating missile woul
for several tanks to pass, then fir
behind at their vulnerable rear.

But however great the fear of be
burning tank, it was the infantry
the greatest casualties.

Only 14 per cent of U.S. service

during World War II were infant
in Normandy the infantry suffere
the casualties. No fewer than 30,
soldiers suffered from the psych
breakdown of 'combat fatigue'.

British soldiers also suffered fro
The advanced

dressing station of the 210th Fie
had to deal with 'a group of terri
disorientated lads - battle shock
yelling in a corner', a doctor wro

'Several SS wounded came in -
dirty bunch - some had been sn
for days. One young Nazi had a
was near death, but before he fai

his head over and murmured "He

Both British and American psycl
the war concluded that the much
combat fatigue among German p

only be explained by the militari
Nazi society which had prepared

Honour: Queen Elizabeth II and
Edinburgh in Bayeux Cemetary
anniversary of the D-Day landin
France

The greatest heroes of the Norm
were the unarmed medics, whom
shot at despite their Red Cross a

One wrote of the 'light of hope' i
wounded men when he appeared
spot those about to die with 'the
colour of death appearing beneat
fingernails. These we would onl
Those making the most noise we
hit, and we would get them to ba
themselves'.

He concentrated on those in sho
severe wounds and heavy bleedi
ever had to use tourniquets, 'sinc
were puncture wounds and bled

were amputations or hits caused
velocity shell or mortar fragmen
the wound shut'.

Newly arrived recruits were usua
die. Otherwise large men, howev
the most likely to be killed. 'The
who really lasted,' the American
'were usually thin, smaller of sta
quick in their movements.'

Real hatred of the enemy came t
noticed, when a buddy was kille
often a total hatred; any German
encountered after that would be

Work parties took the bodies bac

Registration services, which bur
were usually stiff and swollen, a
infected with maggots. A limb n
when they were lifted. The stenc
unbearable, especially at the coll

'Here the smell was even worse,
men working there were apparer
completely under the influence c
they no longer appeared to care.'

The Battle for Normandy was hc
Despite the assumptions of many
German losses per division enga
twice as high as the overall aver
eastern front. And the 225,000 A
were almost as high as the Germ
240,000.

In addition, the Wehrmacht also
men taken prisoner. French civil
suffered terrible losses. Some 15
killed in the preparatory bombin

invasion and another 20,000 die
for Normandy.

The Soviet skeptics who dismiss
Army in the Normandy campaig
of the Wehrmacht could not hav
wrong. The divisions facing the
onslaught were driven by a fanat
hatred that led to the most brutal
war.